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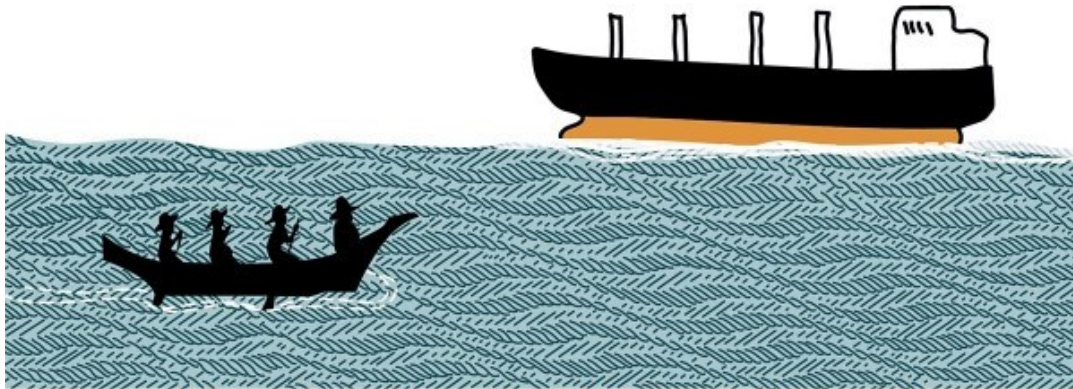


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The Social Fabric: Deep Local to Pan Global



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Silk Velvets Identified as Byzantine:

Were warp-looped silk pile velvets woven under the Byzantine Empire?

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This paper will examine the possibility of whether warp-looped pile velvets, made of silk, were woven during the Byzantine Empire. This study is a continuation of my research for “Velvet and Patronage: the Origin and Historical Background of Ottoman and Italian Velvets.”¹ Research has been conducted under these five themes: 1. Byzantine silk industry; 2. The terminology of velvet in Greek; 3. Velvets in Byzantine written sources; 4. Historical background: the relation between Byzantines and Latin powers, Turks and the Middle East; 5. Latin trade in the Black Sea and 6. Velvet production in Anatolia in the Byzantine period.

1. Byzantine silk industry

Up to today, many extensive studies about Byzantine silks have been conducted by prominent textile scholars.² I will not repeat the history of silk weaving in Byzantium in the limited space of this paper. But suffice it to say, silk weaving had developed in the southerly region of the eastern Mediterranean under Byzantium by the sixth century.³ The manufacture and sale of silk became an imperial monopoly in Constantinople after the reign of Justinian I (527-565), and silk weavings were processed in the imperial workshops and sold to authorized merchants. By the twelfth century, beside Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire, Thebes, Corinth and Peloponnesus islands such as Andros became the important centers of silk weaving.⁴ The author of *Timarion*, who around 1110 described the fair of St. Demetrios in Thessalonica, mentions that Thebes and Corinth were apparently the only textile manufacturers in these regions at that time, and silks were the only fabrics they produced.⁵ At the same time, basic materials for the textile industry such as cotton, flax, wool⁶ and raw silks were produced in the state of Nicaea in Asia Minor.⁷ From the tenth to the eleventh centuries, sericulture was practiced in Byzantine territory as well as in southern

¹ See: Sumiyo Okumura, “Velvet and Patronage: the Origin and Historical Background of Ottoman and Italian Velvets,” in *University of Nebraska – Lincoln, DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska – Lincoln, Textile Society of America Symposium Proceedings* (accessed December, 2017):

<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1993&context=tsaconf>

² See: Robert Sabatino Lopez, “Silk Industry in the Byzantine Empire,” in *Speculum* 20 (1), (1945), 1-42; Anna Muthesius, “Byzantine silks,” in *5000 years of textiles*, ed. Jennifer Harris (London: The British Museum Press, 1993), 75-79; Anna Muthesius, “The Byzantine Silk Industry: Lopez and Beyond,” in *Studies in Byzantine and Islamic Silk Weaving* (London, 1995), 255-314; Anna Muthesius, “Essential Processes, Looms, and Technical Aspects of the Production of Silk Textiles,” in *The Economic History of Byzantium* (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2002), 147-168; David Jacoby, *Byzantium, Latin Romania and the Mediterranean* (Ashgate/Variation, 2001); David Jacoby, *Latins, Greeks and Muslims : encounters in the Eastern Mediterranean, 10th–15th Centuries* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009);

³ Anna Muthesius, “Byzantine silks,” 75.

⁴ David Jacoby, “Venetian Commercial expansion in the eastern Mediterranean, 8th-11th centuries,” *Byzantine Trade, 4th-12th centuries, The Archaeology of Local Regional and International Exchange*, ed. Marlia Mundell Mango (Ashgate, 2009), 379.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, *Trade and Crusade, Venetian Crete and the Emirate of Menteshe and Aydin (1300-1415)* (Venice, 1983), 169.

⁷ Ece Turnator, “Trade and Textile Industry in the State of Nicaea through the Romance of Livistros and Rodamne (Thirteenth Century),” in *Trade in Byzantium* (Istanbul 2016), 319.

Italy, especially Calabria. Byzantium became a renowned silk weaving center, especially known for its weft-faced compound twill weaves. Muthesius mentions that there were five main weaving categories among the surviving silks: tabby, damask, twill, lampas and tapestry weavings.⁸ The Hudud al-Alam lists Byzantine (Rumi) textiles: "... the Byzantines produced great quantities of brocades, *sundus* textiles (silk of a green color), *Maisani* textiles, carpets (*tinfis*), stockings and valuable trouser cords."⁹ These silk weavings were very powerful political tools and their trade was one of the most important economic products for the Byzantines.

2. Terminology of "velvet" in Greek

During the Byzantine period, silk was identified with three terms, *serika*, *blattia* and *metaxa* (μέταξα). According to Galliker, *serika* was a generic word in common use for finished silk cloths;¹⁰ *blattia* referred to finished silk cloth like *serika*, but it also signaled an imperial association, apparently as a means to convey status;¹¹ and *metaxa* was generally used for raw silk.¹² Besides *metaxa*, *porfýra* (πορφύρα), referring to 'deep velvet robes' made out of silk, also used to indicate raw silk.¹³ Actually the word *porfýra* means "purple color or cloth."¹⁴ These words appear extensively in the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae's (TLG) corpus, mostly in Byzantine texts.

As for the term "velvet," which is our major concern, there are two words in Greek: *belluto* (βελούδο) and *kadife* (κανηφές). It is clearly understandable that these words are of foreign origin. *Belluto* comes from the Italian *velluto* / *veludo*, which derived from the word *villus* meaning "Shaggy hair."¹⁵ *Belluto* (βελούδο) is listed in the dictionary *Kriaras*,¹⁶ which covers vernacular early Modern Greek. This word does not appear in *Trapp's* Byzantine lexicon, which covers late Medieval Greek.

In *Kriaras*:

belluto (βελούδο)

βελούδιν το, βλ. βελούσιν.

βελούδο το. Είδος πολυτελούς υφάσματος ή ενδύματος: φορέματα ολόχρυσ, βελούδα, καμουκάδες (Τζάνε, Κρ. πόλ. 14616). [<βεν. veludo. Η λ. στο Du Cange (-ον) και σήμ.]

βελουδοκαμουχένιος, επίθ. Που είναι κατασκευασμένος από βελούδο και καμουχά: (Παῖς., Ιστ. Σινά 679). [<ουσ. βελούδο + επίθ. καμουχένιος]

⁸ Anna Muthesius, "The Impact of the Mediterranean Silk Trade on Western Europe before 1200AD," in *Studies in Byzantine and Islamic Silk Weaving* (London: The Pindar Press, 1995), 136.

⁹ R. B. Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles: Material for a History up to the Mongol Conquest* (Beirut, 1972), 63.

¹⁰ Julia Galliker, "Terminology Associated with Silk in the Middle Byzantine Period (AD 843-1204)," in *Textile Terminologies from the Orient to the Mediterranean and Europe, 1000 BC to 1000 AD*. ed. Salvatore Gaspa, Cecile Michel and Merie-Louise Nosch (Lancon, NE: Zea Books, 2017), 347-348.

¹¹ Ibid., 348.

¹² Ibid., 349.

¹³ I am grateful to Prof. Dr. Maria Pantelia for providing me with this information.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Lisa Monnas, "The Impact of Oriental Silks on Italian Silk Weaving in the Fourteenth Century," *The Power of Things and the Flow of Cultural Transformations, Art and Culture between Europe and Asia*, ed. Lieselotte E. Saurma-Jeltsch, Anja Eisenbeiss (Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2010), 72.

¹⁶ About *Kriaras*, see:

http://www.greek-language.gr/greekLang/medieval_greek/kriaras/search.html?lq=%CE%B2%CE%B5%CE%B%CE%BF%CF%85%CE%B4&dq=

Belluto is also mentioned in such Byzantine sources as *Historia Alexandri Magni*; *Bellum Troianum* (epic), dated to the thirteenth- fourteenth centuries; and *Ilias Byzantina* (epic), dated to the fourteenth century. The word *belluto* can also be found in other archives, dated to the seventeenth century. The *Historia Alexandri Magni* has a range of the third to seventeenth centuries, but the texts in their attested form are rather late. From these contexts, we understand that the word *belluto* of Italian origin appears in Greek sources after the thirteenth century instead of the Greek word.

On the other hand, the term of *kadife* comes from Arabic *qatīfa* / *katīfa* قطيفة and it means "pile, floss fabric." In the aforementioned article, I concluded that *qatīfa* / *katīfa* means warp-looped cut velvet of silk, and was first produced in Baghdad and its vicinity as well as other cities in northern Iran, where sericulture was carried out at the earliest after the eleventh to the twelfth centuries.¹⁷ As of the writing of this article, I have not been able to find the word *kadife* in Greek lexicons, but this term was not a rare word to describe velvet fabrics in the Middle East by the thirteenth century. Monnas remarks that the names given to Italian silks shifted between the mid-thirteenth and late fourteenth century from being predominantly terms of Byzantine derivation to terms reflecting the influence of Far and Near Eastern weaving.¹⁸ It is out of our scope to determine when and how these words entered Greek terminology, but it seems that the Byzantines used both Latin and Arabic terms to express the weaving of velvet after the thirteenth century.

3. Velvets in Byzantine written sources

We learn about dyeing, weaving and tailoring for silk textile production and manufacture in Constantinople, Thebes and Corinth from several important written sources. The most famous of these are the *Book of Eparch*, a collection of regulations applied to guilds under the supervision of the eparch of Constantinople after the tenth century,¹⁹ and the *Book of Ceremonies*, a compilation of the fifth to the tenth century protocols used by court officials to stage imperial rituals.²⁰ However, there is no definition about velvet weavings in those written sources. As Baer says in her research, organized professional corporations of craftsmen did not exist in the Middle East during the eleventh to the twelfth centuries, although many "guilds" played an important role in the economic life of Egypt, at the time Shi'ite influence.²¹ The lack of documentation on them may explain this contradiction. As it can be seen in *fütüvvetname*,²² this type of institution was related to Islamic Sufism (under the early thirteenth century Ottomans, it would be related to *Ahilik*); and its formation was greatly influenced by mystic cultures in Central Asia, especially in Iran before Islam.²³ The local craftsmen of Baghdad, Iraq, most probably under these kinds of institutions combined

¹⁷ See: Okumura, "Velvet and Patronage."

¹⁸ Monnas, Lisa. "The Impact of Oriental Silks on Italian Silk Weaving in the Fourteenth Century," in *The Power of Things and the Flow of Cultural Transformations, Art and Culture between Europe and Asia*, ed. Lieselotte E. Saurma-Jeltsch and Anja Eisenbeiß (Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2010), 67.

¹⁹ Helen C. Evans and Brandie Ratliff, ed., *Byzantium and Islam, Age of Transition* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2012), 129.

²⁰ Galliker, "Terminology Associated with Silk," 346.

²¹ Gabriel Baer, "Guilds in Middle Eastern History," in *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East from the rise of Islam to the present day*, ed. M. A. Cook (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1978), 12-13.

²² *Fütüvvetname* is a book of rules dealing primarily with the organization and the ritual of the guild. See: Mehmet Saffet Sarıkaya, *Fütüvvetname-i Ca'fer Sâdık İnceleme-Metin* (Istanbul, 2008).

²³ Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, "Fütüvvetnâme," in *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol.13 (1996), 264-265. Also see: <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/futuvvetname>

their skills with the techniques of weft-loop linen weavings, brought by Egyptian weavers who had migrated from Dabiki in Egypt to the district of Dabikiya in Baghdad at the end of the tenth century. Craftsmen developed the techniques to produce luxurious velvets with metallic threads. In my aforementioned article, I hypothesized that silk pile velvets probably began to be woven in the eleventh or the twelfth centuries in the Middle East, where these weaving techniques had been cultivated with Chinese influence since the Sassanid period (224 CE-651 CE). On the basis of my hypothesis, it is natural that warp-looped pile velvets, made of silk, have not been mentioned in the *Book of Eparch* or the *Book of Ceremonies*, as the books date to an earlier time than when silk pile velvets began to be woven.

On the other hand, *Kitab al-Hadaya wa al-Tuhaf* (Book of Gifts and Rarities), selections compiled in the fifteenth century from an eleventh century manuscript on gifts and treasures, mentions that velvet textiles were presented by the Emperor Romanos to the Abbasid caliph:²⁴

two velvets (mukhammalah) and ten large velvet cloaks (qutuf) were in the gift list, which was presented by the Byzantine Emperor Romanos to the Abbasid caliph al-Radi bin Allah (r. 322-329 H / 934-940 AD).

The Cairo Genizah documents, which concern the regional silk trade in the eleventh and the twelfth centuries, also provide information about the existence of velvets in Byzantium:²⁵

-Legal document: ketubba²⁶ (T-S NS J283)

Late 10th-century Palestinian ketubba from Damascus, of which only the lower part is preserved. The groom's name is Raḥ[mūn]. The dowry list includes a short garment of linen decorated with silver and golden threads, two shirts, two velvet covers, and two dyeing vessels. Mention is also made of some properties: the apartments in the compound known as Dār al-Jubrānīyīn, the apartments of Ibn Maḥmūd, the apartments of al-Ḥumayṣī. Witnessed by Obadiah ha-Levi, Abraham b. Šadoq, [...] b. Abraham, [...] b. Mevasser, Faraj b. 'Eli, Isaac b. Moses, Ḥusayn b. Sahlān, Amram b. Šabbat, Sedaqa b. [...], and Šimeī (שִׁמְעִי) ha-Levi the cantor b. 'Eli the scribe, who also wrote the document.

Unfortunately, no material evidence of silk velvets identified as being from the middle Byzantine period has survived up to today. We are also not able to establish whether these velvets were made of silk. It is noteworthy that weavings of half silks were mentioned in different Byzantine sources.²⁷ Using other fibers, it became much cheaper to weave textiles with half silks for its warp or weft. Landry mentions that several fragments, which were found in excavations in Egypt, have a warp velvet structure, woven with linen.²⁸ These were possibly variations of Coptic textiles and most probably a transformation from weft-looped velvet structure to warp-looped velvet structure. These early linen velvets must have been woven on warp weighted horizontal looms. Italians are known to have made extensive use of linen for internal warp thread in their semi-silk fabric during the thirteenth to the fourteenth

²⁴ Ghadah al-Hijjawi al-Qaddumi, trans. *Book of Gifts and Rarities* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 99-101. This Tomanos must be Romanos I Lekapenos (r. 920-944).

²⁵ Cambridge Digital Library: <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-TS-NS-J-00283/1>

²⁶ Ketubba is a formal Jewish marriage contract, written in Aramaic, which guarantees a bride certain future rights before her marriage.

²⁷ Galliker, "Terminology Associated with Silk," 352.

²⁸ Wendy S. Landry, "On the Possibility of Byzantine Velvets" in in *University of Nebraska – Lincoln, DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska – Lincoln, Textile Society of America Symposium Proceedings* (accessed in 2003): <https://veloutiere.files.wordpress.com/2011/10/byz-velvet-full.pdf>, 12.

centuries.²⁹ Half-silk solid cut velvets, dated to the late fourteenth century, were unearthed at Baynard's Castle during the excavations undertaken on sites along the Thames River in the 1970s and early 1980s.³⁰ They have a tabby ground, and the main warp is Z-twisted silk, the pile warp silk is without twist; the weft is Z-twisted linen or hemp.³¹ Those velvets must have been woven in Italy using easily found materials during a period of transition to silk velvet weaving.

When Ruy González de Clavijo (?-1412) traveled to Samarkand in the Timurid period, he visited Constantinople under the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos (r. 1391-1425). Clavijo, who was received by the Emperor on 28 October, 1403, reported that the emperor was seated on a high sofa (divan) and a pillow, made of black velvet with gold embroidery, was seen behind him.[32] Were these velvets woven in Byzantium or imported from Italy or the Middle East? In order to answer this question, we need to examine the historical background of the Byzantine Empire and its environment.

4. Historical factors: the relation between Byzantines and Latin powers, Turks and the Middle East

Byzantium had economic and commercial relation with Venice for a long time. When the economic growth of Byzantium was apparent in the early eleventh century, Venetians supplied all kinds of goods, such as food, including spices and culinary herbs and cheeses, clothes, dyestuffs and silks from the Mediterranean to Constantinople. Venetians and other Italian merchants also imported Byzantine silk textiles from Constantinople, Thebes and Corinth to the West in the tenth century.³³ Byzantium did not take part in the raw silk trade of the Islamic Mediterranean, as they were not able to export raw silk. Jacoby remarks that the Venetian integration within the internal Byzantine silk trade must have already occurred in the eleventh century and was extended to Constantinople.³⁴ According to the writing of Romano Mariano, who undertook his first voyage to Halmyros and Constantinople in 1153, Venetian merchants were active in the silk trade and in all forms of commerce between the Peloponnese and Constantinople.³⁵ The Cairo *Genizah* documents show that Byzantine brocade covers and bridal chests often appear in the eleventh to the twelfth centuries Jewish trousseau lists in the Islamic world, though alternatives were available locally.³⁶

After starting the Second Crusade (1147–1148), the Norman king Roger II of Sicily attacked the Byzantine Empire, and sacked the Aegean lands including Athens and Corinth and Thebes. Roger II's admiral plundered the silk factories and deported silk workers from Thebes and Corinth and the Peloponnesian islands to Palermo in 1149. Together with native

²⁹ Anna Muthesius, "The Byzantine silk industry: Lopez and beyond," in *Studies in Byzantine and Islamic Silk Weaving* (London: The Pindar Press, 1995), 297.

³⁰ Elizabeth Crowfoot, Frances Pritchard and Kay Staniland, *Textiles and Clothing 1150-1450* (London: Boydell Press, 2011), 9.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 127.

³² Ömer Rıza Doğrul, trans. Gonzalez de Clavijo, *Timur devrinde Semerkand'a seyahat* (Istanbul: Nakışlar Yayinevi, 1975), 36.

³³ Jacoby, "Venetian Commercial expansion," 379.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 380.

³⁵ Michel Balard, "Latin Sources and Byzantine Prosopography: Genoa, Venice, Pisa and Barcelona," in *Byzantines and Crusaders in non-Greek sources 1025-1204*, ed. Mary Whitby (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 45.

³⁶ Marlia Mundell Mango, "Byzantine trade: local, regional, interregional and international," in *Byzantine Trade, 4th-12th centuries, The Archaeology of Local Regional and International Exchange*, ed. Marlia Mundell Mango (Ashgate, 2009), 8.

Islamic embroiderers of the island, these Greek and Jewish weavers, both men and women, served to form the basis for the Sicilian silk industry at the imperial workshop in Palermo.³⁷ The Greek weavers brought their weaving skills with them into Norman Sicily and substantially raised the quality of the silk textiles which were produced until then. Though Thebes quickly recovered its prosperity and continued to grow rapidly until its conquest by the Latins of the Fourth Crusade in 1204, Corinth never recovered from the Norman sack.

Before 1070, Sicily exported Sicilian fabrics such as the silk known as *Lasin* or *lalas*, pieces of cloth (*Farkha*) and other fabrics, all collectively labeled as "Siqili," besides leather, olive oil, grain and other products to Egypt, Palestine, Syria and North Africa.³⁸ At the same time, Sicily imported raw materials from Egypt and North Africa for the textile and leather industries such as linen and cotton, dyeing substances (indigo, brazil wood and henna), color stabilizers such as alum and sal amoniac, and gall nuts.³⁹ In Sicily, specialized silk weavers produced ribbons and diadems in Palermo until 1350, and then later in Messina. We learn from some written sources that Calabrese Jewish immigrants joined the production of silk velvet in the fifteenth century, though these products were only a small part of the total market.

The conquest of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade in 1204 caused the collapse of the centralized system of imperial control over production and marketing, including the silk industry in Constantinople and the provinces. Jacoby mentions that none of the Latin lords could afford to limit western access to the silk fabrics produced in their territory, nor restrict their distribution, as there was a good chance that western merchants would supply themselves elsewhere.⁴⁰ Because of political circumstances, many artisans left the city in the early thirteenth century and settled in prosperous cities in Anatolia, Italy and Avignon, south France,⁴¹ where they could find a new patron. Those weavers were not only Greek, but also Jewish and Sicilian, joining many other immigrants from neighboring cities in southern Italy.⁴² Thus, starting in the twelfth century, the silk industry, developed in Sicily and Byzantium, transferred first to Lucca, then Venice, Genoa and Florence with the development of the guild system under great patrons. Those cities exported silk products all across Europe.

From the studies of prominent textile scholars, we learn that silk pile velvets in Europe started to be woven from the middle of the thirteenth century onward.⁴³ In Lucca, the first place where velvets were woven, the weaving of different types of figured velvets with satin

³⁷ Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles*, 192; Jennifer Harris, ed., *5000 years of textiles* (London: The British Museum Press), 165; Muthesius, "The Byzantine silk industry: Lopez and beyond," 262.

³⁸ Peter Spufford, *Power and Profit, The Merchant in Medieval Europe* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2006), 248.

³⁹ Nadia Zeldes and Miriam Frenkel, "The Civilian Trade-Jewish Merchants in the Mediterranean in the 12th and 13th centuries," in *Gli Ebrei in Sicilia Dal Tardoantico al Medioevo, Studi in Onore di Mons. Benedetto Rocco*, ed. Nicolo Bucaria (Flaccovio Editore, 1998), 244; Harris, *5000 years of textiles*, 167.

⁴⁰ David Jacoby, *Byzantium, Latin Romania and the Mediterranean* (Ashgate, 2001), 68.

⁴¹ Joelle Rollo-Koster and Thomas M. Izbicki ed., *A Companion to the Great Western Schism (1378-1417)* (Brill, 2009), 248, 250.

⁴² David Jacoby, "The Jewish Communities of the Byzantine World from the Tenth to the Mid-Fifteenth Century: Some Aspects of Their Evolution," in *Jewish reception of Greek Bible versions: Studies in their use in late antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Tubingen, 2009), 177.

https://www.academia.edu/5834113/Jewish_communities

⁴³ Lisa Monnas, "Developments in figured velvet weaving in Italy during the 14th century," in *Bulletin de liaison de la Centre Internationale d'Etudes des Textiles Anciens*, vol. 63/64 (1986): 64; Sophie Desrosiers, "Sur L'Origine d'un Tissue qui a Participe a la fortune de Venise: le velours de soie," in *La seta in Italia dal Medioevo al Seicento* (Venezia: Marsilio Editori, 2000), 44-45.

ground weave (*zetani*⁴⁴ *vellutati*) and thick piles have been confirmed from the fourteenth century.⁴⁵ The subject of how velvet weaving was introduced into Lucca is a promising area of future research. Michael Peter mentions that artistic evolution might have occurred with the increasing availability of Eastern fabrics, and that this led to the creation of fine velvety compositions of the highest level.⁴⁶ We know that in 1374, the Lucca weavers, who had immigrated to Venice, requested velvet rods from Lucca. We understand that weavers preferred to continue using the kind of equipment they had used in Lucca.⁴⁷ These velvets were sold all over Europe by Luccahese and other Tuscan merchants.⁴⁸ During the course of the fourteenth century, Lucca's political fortunes declined and her silk industry went into severe recession. By contrast, the industries of Venice, Florence and Genoa were set to enter a period of prosperity during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.⁴⁹ In Venice, Florence and Genoa, silk velvets became the most luxurious textiles of the late medieval period and were worn by courtiers and clergymen throughout Europe. Emperor Manuel's black-colored velvet pillow with gold embroidery, mentioned earlier, was most likely of Italian velvet. Monnas' description that the color of black was a matter of particular concern in Venice, where all male citizens from the age of 25 were obliged to wear long black formal gowns in public, supports this theory.⁵⁰

5. Latin trade in the Black Sea

From the mid-thirteenth century, besides Acre in the east Mediterranean, the Crimea and the Azov Sea were gateways by which European merchants, especially Genoese and Venetians, went to Caffa and Tana to trade. They also visited those cities to travel to Persia, Transoxiana and even to China⁵¹ to bring back the highest priced oriental goods such as spices, dyestuffs, raw silks and finished silk textiles.⁵² At the same time, Turks, Iranians, Armenians and Arabs also benefitted from the trading in the Black Sea region. Caffa was not only an important textile trading center, but also had a silk weaving industry.⁵³ When the trade in oriental luxuries through Caffa and Tana became reduced because of the disorders in the steppes in the fourteenth century, Trebizond (Trabzon) remained a gateway into the East.⁵⁴ Trebizond became an important trading city from the second half of the ninth century onward.⁵⁵ The Empire of Trebizond was located on the way to connect the East and the West by land and it

⁴⁴ About satin (*zactani*), see: Lisa Monnas, "The Impact of Oriental Silks on Italian Silk Weaving in the Fourteenth Century," in *The Power of Things and the Flow of Cultural Transformations*, ed. Lieselotte E. Saurma-Jeltsch and Anja Eisenbeiß, 65-89. (Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2010), 71.

⁴⁵ Roberta Orsi Landini, *The Velvets / I Velluti, in the Collection of the Costume Gallery in Florence*. Abegg Stiftung and Edizioni Polistampa, 2017, 45.

⁴⁶ See: Michael Peter, "A Head Start Through Technology: Early Oriental Velvet and the West," in *Oriental Silks in Medieval Europe*, ed. Juliane von Fircks and Regula Schorta (Abegg-Stiftung, 2016), 301-315.

⁴⁷ Landini, *The Velvets*, 52.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 45.

⁴⁹ Harris ed., *5000 years of textiles*, 167

⁵⁰ Monnas, *Merchants, princes and painters*, 24.

⁵¹ It is pointed out by Robert Lopez that the silk imported into Europe from China in the 13th century was mainly raw silk rather than finished textiles. See: Monnas, "The Impact of Oriental Silks," 69.

⁵² Spufford, *Power and Profit*, 344.

⁵³ Öztürk, *Osmanlı Hakimiyetinde Keçe, 1475-1600* (Ankara 2000), 480.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 345; Aslıhan Akışık Karakullukcu, "The Empire of Trebizond in The World-Trade System: Economy and Culture," in *Trade in Byzantium, Papers from the Third International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium* (Istanbul: Koc University's Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations, 2016), 331.

⁵⁵ David Jacoby, "Venetian Commercial expansion in the eastern Mediterranean, 8th-11th centuries," in *Byzantine Trade, 4th-12th centuries, The Archaeology of Local Regional and International Exchange*, ed. Marlia Mundell Mango (Ashgate, 2009), 372.

prospered from trading with the Italians.⁵⁶ Mas'udi remarks that there are various markets of Muslims, Byzantines (Rums), Armenians as well as people from the Caucasus who came to trade in Trebizond.⁵⁷ Istakhri mentions that Trebizond is a place of entry into Byzantium, where merchants assemble to enter the land of Rum for the purpose of trading.⁵⁸ Especially textile products such as silks, brocade, buzyun brocade and silk clothes as well as wool cloths were imported and exported in Trebizond.⁵⁹ The town accepted the supremacy of the Ilkhanids circa 1246, acquiring vassal status and benefitting from the Pax Mongolica, while gradually developing into a regional power.⁶⁰ Genoa established their colony in Trebizond in 1270, followed by the Venetians, who set up their colony in the last quarter of the thirteenth century onwards. Karakullukcu remarks in her study that the Italian world trade system in the thirteenth century through the fifteenth centuries relied on the absence of a powerful state in Asia Minor that would interfere with Venetian and Genoese extraterritorial privileges.⁶¹

Tabriz was one of the few towns to escape destruction in the Mongol invasion, which likely allowed it to become the largest city in these regions under Mongol rule.⁶² The city was in such a good position that merchandise was brought from India, Baghdad, Garmsir, the Persian Gulf and many other regions; and that attracted many Latin merchants, especially Genoese.⁶³ Marco Polo (1254-1324) mentions that the men of Tabriz made their living by trade and handicrafts, for they wove many kinds of beautiful and valuable stuffs of silk and gold.⁶⁴ He also quotes that velvets with animal patterns were produced in the city of Bagdad.⁶⁵ This must be the well-known red colored velvet with gold disks in offset rows.⁶⁶ In addition to Tabriz and Bagdad, thin velvet with silk embroidery was produced in Tavvac, Fasa, Siniz, Cennaba⁶⁷ as well as Shiraz.⁶⁸ We also know that craftsmen in Samarkand and neighboring towns produced cramoisy velvet (*qirmiz-ı qatifat*) to export to distant towns and countries in the beginning of the fifteenth century.⁶⁹ These velvets were not just produced for trade, but were also worn by the aristocrats of the Islamic world as ceremonial garments.⁷⁰ Due to the lack of records, little information exists about Oriental velvets which were imported and exported in the Black Sea region in the thirteenth century. Information about Italian velvets can be found after the fourteenth century in letters, agreements, accounts and

⁵⁶ Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer, *Trabzon İmparatorluğunun Tarihi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2011), 293.

⁵⁷ Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles*, 63; Murat Keçiş, *Trabzon Rum İmparatorluğu ve Türkler (1204-1404)* (Ankara 2013), 6.

⁵⁸ Serjeant, *ibid*; Keçiş, *ibid*.

⁵⁹ Serjeant, *ibid*; Keçiş, *ibid*.

⁶⁰ Akışık-Karakullukcu, "The Empire of Trebizond," 330.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 331.

⁶² Sergeant, *Islamic Textiles*, 68.

⁶³ Sergeant, *Islamic Textiles*, 69.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*.

⁶⁵ Abdürkadir Bakır, "Ortaçağ İslam Dünyasında Dokuma Sanayi," *Belleten*, cilt LXIV, sayı 241 (Aralık 2000), 760.

⁶⁶ See: Lisa Monnas, "Developments in Figured Velvet Weaving in Italy during the Fourteenth Century," in *Bulletin de liaison du Centre international d'étude des textiles anciens*, Vol.63/64 (1986): 63-100; Milton Souday, "A Group of Possibly Thirteenth-Century Velvets with Gold Disks in Offset Rows," in *The Textile Museum Journal* 1999-2000, Volumes 38 and 39 (Washington D.C., 2001): 103-104; Desrosiers, "Sur L'Origine d'un Tissue," 60-61; Peter, "A Head Start Through Technology," 302-303; Louise W. Mackie, *Symbols of Power, Luxury Textiles from Islamic Lands, 7th-21st century* (Cleveland: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 2015), 222; okumura, "Velvet and Patronage," 361-362.

⁶⁷ Bakır, "Ortaçağ İslam," 769.

⁶⁸ Bakır, *ibid.*, 775.

⁶⁹ R.G. Mukminova, "Craftsmen and Guild Life in Samarqand," in *Timurid Art and Culture, Iran and Central Asia in the Fifteenth Century* (Leiden, New York and Koln: Brill, 1992), 30, 31.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*.

archives as well as studies done up to today,⁷¹ but there is a lack of sufficient descriptive information, and it is hard to understand whether items described as “velvet” were indeed warp-looped pile velvets, made of silk. This subject needs further investigation.

6. Velvet production in Anatolia under the Byzantine period

In the Middle Ages, Anatolia was not just a trading center between the east and the west. It also produced its own textiles and exported them to both Europe and the Middle East besides raw materials such as cotton, flax and wool.⁷² Under the domination of the Ilkhanids in Anatolia, Erzincan was revived in the thirteenth century. It was a rich city on the route of the Silk Road; the town was on the way from China and Tabriz to Erzurum, and Sivas, Kayseri, Konya to Antalya. This route was used not only by the Seljuks, but also by others, mainly Latin merchants. Marco Polo mentions Erzincan, where he writes the best *buckrams* in the world are woven.⁷³ Ibn Battuta (1304-1377) said that Arzindjan (Erzincan) has well-arranged markets, where they make beautiful garments called after the town there.⁷⁴ According to Yakut, most of the inhabitants of Erzincan were Christians and Armenians, but there were some Muslims.⁷⁵ In *Mukâtebât*, Reshiduddin (1247-1318) mentions the items (200 rolls of kemha, 10,000 arsin of *iskarlat* cloth, and 10,000 zira of *kadife* as well as 6,000 men (batman) pears, 8,000 men apples and 200 men apricots)⁷⁶, which were brought from Erzincan to the capital of Ilkhanid under the designation of Şemseddin Cüveyni (?-1284). Cüveyni was sent to the region of Erzincan and other places as *Incü* (private properties) by the Ilkhanid government in order to restore stability in the land of the Seljuks and to collect special revenue directly.⁷⁷ From these contexts, we understand that velvets (*kadife*) were woven in Anatolia in the thirteenth century. "Turk" velvet was presented to Sultan Murad I (1360-1389) by Karamanoglu Alaaddin Bey together with "Frank" velvet, one hundred thousand silver coins, well bred horses, camels and silk fabrics, when he was marrying Melek Hatun, the daughter of Murad I.⁷⁸ In a later period, we learn from the Caffa customs register of 1487-1490 that gold velvet (*müzehheb kadife*) and patterned velvet (*münakkaş kadife*) were brought to Caffa from Amasya and Samsun; and ordinary velvets were brought to Caffa from Kastamonu and Istanbul (by Jews).⁷⁹ It is possible to argue that silk production infrastructure had not been prepared for the mass production of luxurious and expensive velvet weaves due to political upheaval in Anatolia before the Ottomans. Tezcan notes that due to the Mongol Crusader invasion, silk weavers of Anatolia under Byzantine rule settled in Venice, where they could be protected by substantial patronage.⁸⁰

⁷¹ See: Akışık-Karakullukcu, “The Empire of Trebizond,” 323-336; Angeliki Tzavara, “Conflicts, Caravans and Silk: Some Aspects of the Venetian Presence in Trebizond (1371-1376),” in *Union in Separation, Diasporic Groups and Identities in the Eastern Mediterranean (1100-1800)* (Zaragoza: Portico Librerias, 2015), 287-310.

⁷² See: Kate Fleet, *European and Islamic Trade in the Early Ottoman State, The Merchants of Genoa and Turkey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 95-111.

⁷³ Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles*, 66; Fleet, *ibid.*, 97.

⁷⁴ Serjeant, *ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Şerafettin Turan, *Türkiye-İtalya İlişkileri I* (Ankara 2000), 164; *ibid.*, footnote: Reshidüddin *Mukâtebât*, trans. Muhammed Şefi (Lahor 1369), 185-207; Bakır, “Ortaçağ İslam,” 767.

⁷⁷ İlhan Erdem, “Türkiye Selçuklu-İlhanlı İktisadi, Ticari İlişkileri ve Sonuçları / Economic and Commercial Relations between Anatolian Seljukid and Ilkhanid States and the Results of this Relations,” in *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Tarih Bölümü Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi* (2003), 53-54.

⁷⁸ Hülya Tezcan, *Bursa'nın İpekli* (Bursa, 2016), 66-67.

⁷⁹ Halil Inalcik, *Sources and Studies on the Ottoman Black Sea vol. I, The Customs Register of Caffa, 1487-1490* (Cambridge, 1996), 59 and 123.

⁸⁰ Hülya Tezcan, “Topkapı Sarayı'nın çatmaları,” in *Antik Dekor*, Sayı 85 (Kasım-Aralık 2004): 87.

Conclusion

Based on a number of historical sources, we reach the conclusion that warp-looped silk pile velvets were not woven in the imperial workshops of Byzantium. This can be attested by the fact that the Latin word “belluto” and the Arabic and Ottoman term “kadife / qatifa” were used in Byzantium instead of the Greek word to express velvet weaving. It is out of our scope to determine when and how these words entered Greek terminology, but most likely after the thirteenth century. We base this assumption on the historical background in the Mediterranean in the thirteenth to fourteenth century. Craftsmen produced local items and developed their skills and techniques; and a world trade system, which could transport goods from China, India and the Crimea to Europe, was created. Together with velvet textiles, velvet weaving techniques would have been introduced to Europe from the East. After the Mongol invasion into Anatolia, weavers in Anatolia resettled in Italy to seek new patronage. Thus, after the thirteenth century, Italians started weaving velvets with the development of the guild system under strong local patronage. The East’s demand for velvets began to be satisfied from European sources after the fourteenth century and Eastern velvet textiles were gradually replaced by Italian velvets. Most probably, Byzantium purchased or ordered these velvets from Italy, especially from Venice, as well as from the towns such as Erzincan in Asia Minor. The subject of how velvet weaving was introduced in Lucca is a promising area of future research.

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